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## ESTRANGEMENT IN SOCIETY

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However solidified the group may become, one can never be sure that the current of events will not carry it upon some rock which will split it. Families are rent by quarrels, neighborhoods by feuds, churches by controversies; while larger unions, lacking personal acquaintance, are yet more unstable. So it is necessary to take into account a process, quite the reverse of socialization, which may be called *estrangement*. It is not that the ties knit up in the course of a common experience ravel out, as in the case of wanderers who in a far country gradually forget their fatherland. What happens is that these ties are strained or even snapped because a cross-current pulls one part of the group away from the other. No doubt, if change could be arrested, the fellow-feeling among the members of a society would last and would descend to their children and children's children; but change is inevitable, and, although some changes solidify, others tend to cleave the group. For all that intercourse and common experience may be making a people into one big family, there is no assurance that a sharp turn in industrial development or a strange doctrine will not set them at loggerheads.

The growth of sectionalism during the half-century before the American Civil War illustrates how a new economic tendency may thrust people apart. After the invention of the cotton gin the South more and more went over to cotton, a slave-made crop, so that its slavery became intensified; whereas in the North such labor was less productive than free labor, and the institution of slavery died out. Thus "King Cotton" laid the foundation for the strife between North and South.

The practice of extracting gold by washing down low-pay dirt with a jet of water under high pressure so clogged certain California river beds as to cause the rivers to overflow and smother rich bottom

lands under a mantle of silt. The hostility between the ranchers of the valley and the miners of the foothills became very bitter before the legislature of the state put a curb on hydraulic mining.

An acute fall in prices, beginning with the last quarter of the nineteenth century and exceeding the decline in cost of production, by increasing the burden of private and public debts, brought on a political conflict in America between creditors and agricultural debtors which culminated in the heated and emotional presidential campaign of 1896. Soon afterward the great increase in gold production started prices on an upward movement which drew *that* thorn out of our flesh.

The early population of Australia, although homogeneous enough, was torn over the question of tolerating the continuance of the penal transportation of convicts from England. The large landowners naturally favored a system which automatically provided them with a supply of cheap labor. The artisan and small farmers wished to stop this flooding of the labor market, both in their own interest and for the sake of the future of the colony. Another cause of bad blood was the opposition between the sugar-planters of North Queensland, who manned their cane fields with kidnaped South Sea Islanders, held virtually in a condition of slavery, and the people of South Queensland, who, living outside the sugar belt, could foresee the evils which the "blackbirding" trade would fasten upon the country.

Even the gold discoveries brought riot and bloodshed to Australia. In order to prevent the ranches and towns from being stripped of labor, the property-owners prevailed upon the government to undertake to check the mad rush to the gold fields by requiring a state license to dig gold. The gold-diggers rioted, burned licenses publicly, fortified their camp, and ran up a flag bearing the words: "Republic of Victoria."

Much of the early political history of certain Australian colonies is made up of the struggles between "squatters" and "selectors." The former had seized upon great tracts of public land and insisted upon using them for grazing, when thousands of landless men were clamoring to be allowed to acquire the public domain for farming.

There is, indeed, no end of ways in which a new economic slant may breed strife. A pastoral people falls asunder because the men of the plain take to the plow and the men of the shore to ship-building and trade, while the hill folk continue to keep their flocks. In republican Rome slaves, the booty of foreign conquest, thrust a wedge between the large landowners and the small cultivators. The English Black Death of 1349 fired a train which is said to have led to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. The issuance of paper money, a natural makeshift in a young community, long vexed the peace of the American colonies. The Constitution laid the specter for three-quarters of a century, only to see it reappear as the "greenback" question. The federal tax of 1791 on distilled spirits provoked a revolt among people west of the Alleghany Mountains, who had been accustomed to convert their corn into whiskey as an economical form in which to carry it to a distant market. In the old seaboard South the farmers of the upland districts were opposed socially and politically to the planter aristocracy of the lowlands.

The possibilities of trouble baffle the foresight of the statesman. Government action to stamp out a popular vice may exasperate a district devoted to breeding race horses or to growing the vine or the poppy. A new industry or a chance to build up an export trade may make one region restive under a tax or a trade policy acceptable to all the rest. The people of our Atlantic Coast may resent the obstacles to trade with the Orient raised by an immigration policy demanded by the people of the Pacific Coast. In California with the rise of fruit-growing there broke out a great agitation by orchardists against the general property tax, under which they had to pay taxes on their fruit trees for some years before they came into bearing.

Then, too, quite aside from clash of economic interest, the soul-molds of a people may so change that the types they turn out chafe one another. Thus the commercial regions become critical and progressive, while the rural parts cherish old dynastic loyalties. The town artisans become free-thinking, but the peasants remain devout. As cities grow big, we see more of an urban type having little in common with the farming population. Mining the precious metals fosters a restless speculative spirit that goes ill

with the home-loving conservative spirit bred by agriculture. Machine industry gathers multitudes into its tentacular grasp and sets its stamp upon them. Mixing of bloods brings race war nearer by multiplying the number of aspiring mulattoes and near-whites to whom the rigid color line is intolerable.

Unequal appropriation of culture weakens fellow-feeling. The residents of the littoral, accessible to foreign influences, become cosmopolitan, while the people of the interior stick to the "good old ways" and resent what they deem the apostasy of the ports. From the Book of Maccabees one may divine what strifes were produced by the penetration of Hellenism into the peoples about the Eastern Mediterranean during the century after Alexander the Great. Since Peter the Great, Russia has oscillated like a pendulum between the party standing for European imitation and the party standing for Muscovite tradition. The Chinese in contact with foreigners want to introduce railroads, sanitation, and girls' schools, which the back country regards as impious. Stalled in an eighteenth-century stage of development, the isolated people of our Appalachians imagine our great cities to be sinks of wickedness, while the cities look upon these old-fashioned mountain-dwellers as degenerates.

Like-mindedness is ruptured also by movements in the sphere of ideas. The ancient Jews were torn by the discord between Pharisees and Sadducees. When Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, schisms and heresies gave trouble. Africa was convulsed by the Donatist movement; Egypt was dissatisfied owing to Monophysitism and, no doubt, for this gave herself the more readily to the Arab conquerors. The persecuted Montanist sectaries of Phrygia revolted in the sixth century. The Mohammedans, too, became estranged into Shiites and Sunnites, and only a little over a century ago they lost Arabia to the puritanic sect of Wahabees.

In the eighth century the Christians of the East were rent by the quarrel over the use of images, and the migration of fifty thousand Greek image-worshippers to Southern Italy gave that region a Hellenic stamp which it has not yet lost. Later, Latin and Greek Christianity went asunder and entered upon divergent

paths of development. The rise of Protestantism in the sixteenth century, coupled with the repressive policy of the church, brought on civil strife in most European peoples and gave birth to a series of bloody wars of religion. Since Galileo the contradictions between dogma and science have produced countless estrangements. Nor should one overlook the disturbances following the rise of such sects as the Anabaptists, the Mormons, the Babists, the Taipings, the Boxers, the Mahdists, and the Senussites. Probably in no countries has the social tissue been more often cleft by eccentric religious movements than in Russia and in the United States.

In South America today we see controversies of great bitterness engendered by the introduction of ideas of religious liberty, separation of church and state, lay education, civil marriage, and civil divorce. A lifetime ago the propagation of antislavery doctrines among us aroused much hatred and hostility. From time to time we have been rent by angry disputes over vaccination, woman's rights, faith-healing, Darwinism, higher biblical criticism, land-value, taxation, and liquor regulation. At present such doctrines as the right of labor to the whole produce, class war, direct action, the single standard of morals for both sexes, birth control, and the sterilization of the unfit lead to sharp dissension and even to violence.

The fermentation set up by the spread of new knowledge or of ideas based thereon is inevitable, if there is to be a progress in culture. But consider how rarely we see a clean fight between truth and error. How often conflict is between systems of ideas equally arbitrary! Indeed, it is the clash of ideas farthest from a fact basis which rouses most animosity.<sup>1</sup> Now, when controversies reach the pitch of alienating fellow-citizens or fellow-countrymen, the consequences may be serious. Migration, secession, or civil war is possible, and, in any case, there is less willingness to work together. National defense may be fatally weakened, government thwarted in carrying out policies of general benefit, facility in civic and social co-operation lost. Friendly intercourse may become less general, while clannishness and sectarianism grow until the people are divided by internal frontiers which are no less real for being invisible.

<sup>1</sup> See Ross, *Social Psychology*, p. 313.

To preserve the social peace and to keep alive the we-feeling is of such moment that the true statesman will bestir himself to counteract estranging tendencies whenever they appear. In general, since there is no trouble in locating the sore spot, the oppositions of interest created by economic development are the easier to deal with. Sometimes what is needed is to extend government authority into a neglected field. The deadly struggle in frontier society between "moderators" and "regulators," after the latter have become infested by rogues who take private vengeance under the guise of lynch law, ceases with the establishment of regular courts. If cowboys and shepherds of the Far West fight over the use of the natural pastures in the public domain, a leasing system is called for. The conflicts between cattlemen, who without warrant had fenced great tracts of government land, and settlers asserting their rights under the homestead law ended when President Roosevelt made the fences come down. Gun law among the salmon-canners on Alaskan rivers can be ended by devising wise rules enforced by government agents on the spot. Hostilities between workingmen and mine guards ought to cease with the advent of a well-managed state force. Sniping between oyster tongers of the Chesapeake calls for a system of leasing of bay bottom for oyster-growing. Bad blood between employers and wage-earners is a challenge to the lawmaker to remedy such glaring evils as the long day, seven-day labor, preventable industrial accident and diseases, underpayment, and unemployment.

A lasting sense of grievance in any worthy element respecting an established policy raises like a fester in the flesh the presumption that something is wrong. The useful classes do not go on rioting over nothing; so reliance upon bullets and bayonets as a means of restoring social peace is usually a confession of bankruptcy of statesmanship. This is not to say that every aggrieved interest can be given the particular redress it demands. It may ask for the wrong remedy or it may have flung itself directly across the path of the advancing general interest. But ordinarily a persistent outcry is a symptom of maladjustment. Change has gone on unheeded until some law or institution has ceased to fit. Finer adjustment, greater elasticity, or special treatment is called for.

The complaint of timber-owners that the annual taxation of their trees compels premature cutting points to a tax collected only when the timber is harvested. The manufacturers' cry for free raw materials in order to build up a foreign trade suggests a revision of the tariff. Labor's protest against the importation of shiploads of aliens for strike-breaking purposes justifies the exclusion of contract laborers. Such legal distinctions as those between Quakers and others in respect to bearing arms and taking oaths, between tax-paying women and other women as regards the exercise of the franchise, between "labor" and "commodity," between ordinary businesses and those "affected with a public interest," and between "reasonable" and "unreasonable" restraint of trade illustrate how the law has been differentiated for the sake of social good feeling.

Whenever laws and policies do not admit of being made flexible enough to suit growing regional and local peculiarities, the time has come for a devolution of certain powers of government. The unitary state should become federal. Colonies and distinct geographic provinces should be conceded a sphere of "home rule," while local differences respecting schools, poor-relief, taxing system, and liquor regulation may justify the grant of county or local option. The centralized state, by affording a leverage for the élite and the expert, can do most to accelerate social advance; but for a motley people decentralized government is more conducive to the preservation of the social peace. Here probably is the solution for polyethnic masses, like the people of Austro-Hungary and Russia.

How society may avoid the animosities which oppositions of belief or ideal engender is a difficult question. Long ago statesmen came to value like-mindedness and sought to conserve it by certain policies which experience has shown to be futile or even pernicious. The withdrawal from foreign influence, by excluding the alien, restraining travel abroad, and avoiding foreign intercourse succeeded for a time in ancient Sparta and in the Far East, but much good was missed, and when the inevitable adjustment came, it was the more violent from having been delayed. The suppression of free inquiry protects religious unity only by chaining the mind



and impeding intellectual progress. An established state religion, secure in its endowments, is likely to lose much of that appealing warmth and life which make it a social bond. The relentless persecution of heresy is likely to foment internal strife and, in any case, it weakens the race by extirpating in each generation many of the more daring and original minds.

It seems a paradox to urge total separation of church and state, religious liberty, and freedom of communication as preservative of social good feeling. But, in truth, the variety of opinion which springs up under freedom kindles a minimum of hostility. Disagreements irritate little so long as the bigot is not allowed to climb into the saddle. No privileged orthodox may glower upon another as a heretic. None is embittered by being discriminated against or persecuted. No one is galled by being forced to contribute to the support and propagation of creed he does not believe. Contradictions are made suave by a spirit of tolerance, so that, after all, mental heterogeneity proves to be a nettle that stings least the hand that grasps it brusquely.

But while diversity of opinion does not of necessity engender strife, it is likely to interfere with social team work. Sectaries are often clannish, slow to mingle socially with outsiders or to join with their neighbors in the furtherance of such common interests as public health, community development, education, or the advancement of secular knowledge. In the American population there have been thousands of groups sewed up in separatist dogmas and dead to most of the feelings which agitate the rest of society. The spirit of co-operation has, no doubt, been weakened by the formation of numerous "peculiar" religious sects, each cut off from the general population by its fancied possession of a special prophet or revelation and its assurance of being the exclusive object of divine favor.

A self-conscious society will therefore endeavor to limit sect-forming by providing for the widest possible diffusion of secular knowledge. An unlettered and ignorant people, if it escapes the guidance of ancestral churches and trained ministers, is likely to be endlessly divided and redivided by futile variations of creed and worship. On the other hand, the general enlightenment

resulting from a system of universal education narrows the power of the fanatic or of the false prophet to gain a following. The public university, moreover, rears up a type of leader who will draw men together with unifying thoughts, instead of dividing them, as does the sect-founder, with his private imaginings and personal notions. The great contrast between the period before the Civil War and the period since in respect to sect-forming is, no doubt, owing chiefly to the lessening of superstitiousness and credulity among the American people through the influence of popular education and the leadership of educated men.